World Health Organization

Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine

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Traditional medicine

Traditional medicine has a long history. It is the sum total of the knowledge, skill, and practices based on the theories, beliefs, and experiences indigenous to different cultures, whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness.

Complementary medicine

The terms “complementary medicine” or “alternative medicine” refer to a broad set of health care practices that are not part of that country’s own tradition or conventional medicine and

are not fully integrated into the dominant health-care system. They are used interchangeably with traditional medicine in some countries.

Herbal medicines

Herbal medicines include herbs, herbal materials, herbal preparations and finished herbal products, that contain as active ingredients parts of plants, or other plant materials, or combinations.

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